

THE KNOWLEDGE HOUSE



AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY REPORT

THE STATE OF THE
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM 2026



UN support vehicles are pictured at the earthquake relief supplies transfer center in Kunar province, Afghanistan.
[Xinhua/Shutterstock](#).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The humanitarian landscape in Afghanistan underwent a major transformation post-August 2021. The convergence of evolving gender policies, shrinking humanitarian space, international sanctions and major funding cuts shaped aid delivery, reach and needs. During the study period, the humanitarian response operated under unprecedented constraints, with women and girls bearing the greatest systemic pressures.



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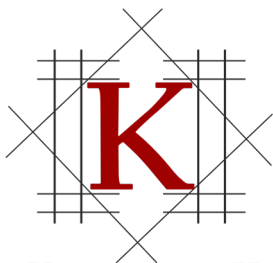
International sanctions introduced additional administrative and compliance requirements, which in some cases slowed financial processes and created operational challenges for national NGOs, particularly those with limited access to international banking channels. Meanwhile, differing interpretations around engagement with the current authorities contributed to variations in coordination approaches, with donors and clusters adopting different modalities of engagement. Women and girls faced increased challenges due to the changes affecting access to education and mobility restrictions. Together, these factors affected their access to services and their participation in decision making. At the same time, administrative requirements and the 2025 funding cuts narrowed the space for gender responsive humanitarian programming.

Aid organisations operated in a context where they were maintaining field presence which often required practical adjustments to support continued access and implementation. And these dynamics could, at times, create challenges in fully upholding humanitarian principles such as independence, impartiality, and neutrality.



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National aid organisations continued to play an important role in aid delivery due to their contextual knowledge and ability to navigate local dynamics. At the same time, many operated with more limited institutional capacity and support mechanisms compared with larger international organisations, while also managing extensive compliance requirements. Women-led organisations, in particular, faced additional operational and administrative challenges, including meeting donor compliance processes within the existing context. Respondents noted that these factors reduced operational presence of some organisations at a time of significant humanitarian need.



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